“There’s mold growing on their mattresses.”

Lake County Jail Sued Over Dangerous Living Conditions

Staff Report
Billings, Montana

A lawsuit filed against Lake County Jail in Polson, filed March 30, 2022, involves 38 current and former inmates of the facility, said Upper Seven Law in its press release.
Constance Van Kley, the lead attorney, said that inmates housed in Lake County are living in dangerous and extremely unhealthy conditions, some of which include standing water from drainage issues and little access to fresh air or sunlight. The release further stated that inmates are frequently left without basic hygiene items, and that hot water is a "hit-or-miss" amenity.

Van Kley told Montana News Medium,

"This jail is in a basement. There is no ventilation. Very little sunlight gets in, if any. There's mold growing in their mattresses and on the walls."

-Constance Van Kley,
Upper Seven Law

The law firm out of Missoula noted that Lake County Commissioners are "pressuring the state to give them more taxpayer funding, and they cite the conditions at Lake County Jail as one of the reasons for requesting more money."

The only problem with that, Van Kley said, is that the jail already settled a similar lawsuit in 1995. Part of that agreement was a promise from county officials to remedy the poor conditions found in their local jail. However, not much has changed 27 years later, as evidenced by the photos and video filmed by the law firm.

Entrance to Lake Co. Jail, which is located in the basement of the local courthouse. (Photo by Upper Seven Law)

Van Kley concluded, "They [county officials] have willfully turned a blind eye to this jail and its treatment of inmates and staff. They need to be held accountable for this."

Lake County Sheriff's Office and County Commissioners both declined to comment on the matter.

Mold grows on many of the surfaces in the jail’s dimly lit areas. (Photo by Upper Seven Law)